

A CHAT ABOUT THE BAGPIPE.

BY J. CUTHBERT HADDEN.

PART I.

The notion that the bagpipe is a peculiarly national instrument, the sole and exclusive property of the Scots, is one which still lingers in certain quarters, more particularly, perhaps, in the minds of the Cockney and dwellers south of the border generally. It is a notion that, as we shall see, has no historical foundation; but the Englishman clings to it with a pertinacity equal to that which has always led him to believe that we never by any chance put the male limbs into a pair of trousers, that we feed on oatmeal three times a day, and occasionally browse on a thistle by way of luxury. Reels and reek, kilts and "kill the carter," pipes and porridge—these, according to him, are the things which delight us most, the things which, above all others, we regard as being specially and peculiarly our own. It all comes of the Englishman being allowed to feed what little intellect he has on the caricatures of the so-called comic press. If you persistently clothe the elder of the kirk in a kilt and as persistently put a bagpipe over the shoulders of the Macnab, the Cockney must inevitably come to regard these adornments as inseparable from the typical Scot, to be set down to his credit by reason both of inheritance and priority of usage. To look into the history of the matter would probably be held as superfluous by the average Englishman, who is content to accept his beliefs as he accepts his religion, without question. Happily, we in Scotland have not yet lost our taste for studies of this kind, and to-day we shall take leave to place the ancient pipe once more on the borders of the living land—to have what shall really be a "chat" about the origin, distribution, and uses of this time honored instrument, of whose possession most of us, it is to be hoped, are as proud as we once were of our national independence.

Well, then, let us see, first of all, if we cannot turn the tables upon the Englishman by showing him that his ancestors had probably as much regard for what belikes to call "the war-note of Lochiel" as the most patriotic of Celts can have in these later days. The task will be comparatively easy, for, as a matter of fact, the bagpipe has in Scotland a much shorter history as a musical instrument than it enjoys in many other countries, and this is true of it as compared with its use even in England. So far back as the time of Chaucer, the poet, tells us of a miller who could play the pipes:—

A baggepipe wold coude he blowe and sowne,
And therewithal he broughte us out of towne.

Then, is it not curious that Shakespeare, who makes frequent reference to the instrument—as when he speaks of "the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe," the antipathy some people have to its sound, of some who laugh like parrots at a bagpipe, and so on—is it not curious that, with all this, he never once associates the instrument with the Scots? In truth, the bagpipe of the great dramatist's day was much more of an English instrument than a Scotch. According to the musical historians, a pipe formed part of the musical establishment of the English sovereigns and noblemen from the time of Edward III. downwards; but we find no record of the employment of any such musician at the Scottish Courts of that period. Instead, we find that when an occasional payment is made to a piper at Holyrood he always figures in the treasurer's books as English. Thus, in July, 1489, there is a disbursement, "English pypparis that cam to the castel yett and playit to the king,"

and again, in 1605, there is another payment "to the English pyppar with the drone.

These and other circumstances still to be noted go to show that the bagpipe had not yet taken the place of the harp in Scotland as the national instrument, *par excellence*; for it is impossible to believe that in the days when Scotland was an independent kingdom its own musicians would not have been countenanced in preference to players imported from the other side of the border. In England, too, it seems that the piper was frequently selected as an object of royal favor. In the ninth year of Henry VII. "Podesay the piper and bagpiper" received 6s 8d from the king for a single performance, or about £5 of our money, which was surely liberal pay seeing that wheat was then 1s 3d the bushel, and that a whole ox might be had for £1 10s 7d. And if there was then no royal society of musicians there were at any rate institutions of a kind for the training of minstrels. We find it recorded that license was granted to one Moslan, "the bagpiper," to inspect the minstrel's schools, for which duty he was paid a fee of 40s, a sum that would now be reckoned as about £30. Moslan appears to have found that the schools were not managed so well as he had expected, for after the inspection a certain Barbor, designated also as "the bagpiper," received license to visit the schools for pipers "beyond the sea."

Many other instances of the use of the bagpipe in England might be adduced if space were a matter of no consideration. Vernon, for example, in "The hunting of Purgatory to Death," a curious work printed in London in 1561, commemorates a priestly bagpiper, the curate of a country parish, who did not disdain, walking at the head of a marriage procession, to play the bride and groom sweetly to church; and in like manner "gentillie bringe them home agayne with backe-pipe." Whilst officiating in church, it seems that this exemplary divine allowed his instrument to remain upon the altar, where he "layed it hand-somely" before he began to celebrate mass. Vernon appears to have had some doubts about the piper priest being accepted by his readers, for he adds solemnly, "this is a true tale that I tell you." Then again, in Kinder's History of Derbyshire, written about the middle of the seventeenth century, there is a very explicit reference to the pipes. "Your merry wives of Bentley," says the author, "will sometimes look in ye glass, chirpe a cup merrily, yet not indecently. In the Peak they are much given to dance after the bagpipes. Almost every towne hath a bagpipe in it."—*Ober Times*

(To be continued).

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His Name.

A drummer entered a city hotel a few days ago and approached the register. He made a few enquiries and then proceeded to disfigure the book with a row of marks like this:

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The clerk resented the disfigurement with the remark that "This ain't a drawing school, sir; neither is it a headquarters for the solution of idiotic geometrical problems."

At the conclusion of his little speech he glanced once more at the register and saw, to his surprise, that by a few strokes of his pen the visitor had transformed the disfigurement into

H. H. HILL.

Strange though it may seem, he treated to cigars.—*New Bedford Journal*

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A Bright Lad,

Ten years of age, but who declines to give his name to the public, makes this authorized, confidential statement to us:

"When I was one year old, my mamma died of consumption. The doctor said that I, too, would soon die, and all our neighbors thought that even if I did not die, I would never be able to walk, because I was so weak and puny. A gathering formed and broke under my arm. I hurt my finger and it gathered and drew out pieces of bone. If I hurt myself so as to break the skin, it was sure to become a running sore. I had to take lots of medicine, but nothing has done me so much good as Ayer's Sarsaparilla. It has made me well and strong."—T. D. M., Norcatur, Kans.

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